Specification for Patent Application

comparing the meter reading to a meter reading previously received from the gaming device to form a delta value; and

determining the percentage of the wager based on the delta value for each gaming device and adding the percentage to the bonus pool.

5   Preferably, receiving a meter reading on the bonus server from the meter on each gaming device comprises receiving the meter reading from each of the gaming devices at substantially regular time intervals.

Preferably, selecting one of the gaming devices comprises choosing one of the gaming devices at random.

10   Preferably, the method further comprises accumulating a further percentage of a wager played on each gaming device into a hidden bonus pool stored on the bonus server.

Preferably, the method further comprises:

dividing the hidden bonus pool into a plurality of consolation prizes; and

15   awarding the consolation prizes to the gaming devices other than the selected gaming device.

Preferably, the method further comprises rolling the hidden bonus pool over into the bonus pool after awarding a bonus prize.

Preferably, the method further comprises generating an anticipation message
20   after comparing the bonus pool to a threshold value stored on the bonus server when the bonus pool is within a predetermined count from the threshold value, the predetermined count representing a number of wagers required by the bonus pool to substantially meet the threshold value.

THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS

1. A method for controlling a bonusing promotion system using a bonus server interconnected to a plurality of gaming devices, comprising:

   accumulating a percentage of a wager played on each gaming device into a bonus pool stored on the bonus server;

   comparing the bonus pool to a threshold value stored on the bonus server each time the bonus pool changes;

   selecting one of the gaming devices when the threshold value is substantially met; and

   awarding a bonus prize funded by the bonus pool to the selected gaming device.

2. A method according to claim 1, wherein accumulating a percentage of a wager played on each gaming device into a bonus pool stored on the bonus server comprises:

   recording the wager on a meter on each gaming device;

   receiving a meter reading on the bonus server from the meter on each gaming device;

   comparing the meter reading to a meter reading previously received from the gaming device to form a delta value; and

   determining the percentage of the wager based on the delta value for each gaming device and adding the percentage to the bonus pool.

3. A method according to claim 2, wherein receiving a meter reading on the bonus server from the meter on each gaming device comprises receiving the meter reading from each of the gaming devices at substantially regular time intervals.

4. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 3, wherein selecting one of the gaming devices comprises choosing one of the gaming devices at random.

5. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein said method further comprises accumulating a further percentage of a wager played on each gaming device into a hidden bonus pool stored on the bonus server.

6. A method according to claim 5, wherein said method further comprises:

dividing the hidden bonus pool into a plurality of consolation prizes; and

awarding the consolation prizes to the gaming devices other than the selected gaming device.

7. A method according to claim 5 or 6, wherein said method further comprises rolling the hidden bonus pool over into the bonus pool after awarding a bonus prize.

8. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein said method further comprises generating an anticipation message after comparing the bonus pool to a threshold value stored on the bonus server when the bonus pool is within a predetermined count from the threshold value, the predetermined count representing a number of wagers required by the bonus pool to substantially meet the threshold value.

9. A method according to claim 8, wherein said method further comprises generating an award message for receipt by the gaming devices after generating the anticipation message.

10. A method according to claim 9, wherein generating an award message comprises:

    locking the gaming devices from further game play;

    providing a visual indicator on the gaming devices; and

5   providing an audible indicator on the gaming devices.

11. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 10, wherein said method further comprises sending a win message to a bank controller interposed between the bonus server and the gaming devices.

12. A method according to claim 11, wherein said method further comprises
10   activating a visual display on the bank controller responsive to receipt of the win message.

13. A method according to claim 11 or 12, wherein said method further comprises activating a sound bank on the bank controller responsive to receipt of the win message.

15 14. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 13, wherein said method further comprises:

    monitoring wagering activity frequency on each gaming device; and

    selecting those of the gaming devices with such a wagering activity frequency exceeding a predefined frequency as eligible to win the
20   bonus prize.

15. A method of operating gaming devices interconnected by a computer network to a host computer comprising:

    permitting players to play the gaming devices;

paying to each gaming device in accordance with a pay table stored in the gaming device;

selecting one of the gaming devices for a bonus;

indicating to the player of the selected gaming device that the gaming device is selected;

paying the bonus at the gaming device responsive to a player-generated input to the gaming device.

16. A method according to claim 15, wherein said method further comprises:

establishing a predetermined minimum level of gaming device play;

detecting wagers made at each of the gaming devices; and

initiating a bonus period during which gaming devices that exceed the minimum level are eligible to be paid the bonus and gaming devices which do not exceed the minimum level are not eligible for the bonus.

17. A method according to claim 16, wherein initiating a bonus period comprises transmitting a command over the network to the gaming devices.

18. A method according to claim 16 or 17, wherein said method further comprises:

using the network to track the amount of money played on the selected gaming devices; and

allocating a predetermined percentage played to a bonus pool.

19. A method according to any one of claims 16 to 18, wherein the bonus period is initiated after the bonus pool exceeds a predetermined level.

20. A method according to any one of claims 15 to 19, wherein indicating to the player of the selected gaming device that the gaming device is selected comprises transmitting a pay command from the host computer over the network.

5   21. A method according to any one of claims 16 to 20, wherein said method further comprises:

storing data defining the predetermined minimum level of gaming device play in a memory at the gaming device; and

comparing the level of gaming device play with the stored data.

10   22. A method according to any one of claims 16 to 21, wherein said method further comprises indicating to a player of the gaming device whether or not the gaming device is eligible to be paid a bonus.

23. A method according to any one of claims 15 to 22, wherein said method further comprises paying a substantial award to a different one of the gaming devices

15   prior to selecting one of the gaming devices for a bonus award.

24. A method according to claim 23, wherein said method further comprises, after paying a substantial award to one of the gaming devices:

selecting a plurality of the gaming devices for a bonus;

indicating to the players of the selected devices that the devices are

20   selected; and

paying the bonus at the devices responsive to a player-generated input to each gaming device.

25. A method according to any one of claims 15 to 22, wherein said method further comprises paying a substantial award to a different one of the gaming devices prior to selecting one of the gaming devices for a bonus award.

26. A method according to claim 25, wherein said method further comprises:

5   selecting each of the eligible gaming devices for a bonus;

indicating to the players of the selected devices that the devices are selected; and

paying the bonus at the devices responsive to a player-generated input to each gaming device.

10 27. A method of operating gaming devices interconnected by a computer network to a host computer comprising:

establishing a predetermined minimum frequency of gaming device play;

detecting wagers made at each of the gaming devices; and

15   initiating a bonus period during which gaming devices that exceed the minimum frequency of gaming device play are eligible to be paid a bonus responsive to the occurrence of a predetermined event and gaming devices that do not exceed the minimum frequency of gaming device play are not eligible for such a bonus.

20 28. A method according to claim 27, wherein said method further comprises:

creating a player account accessible by the host computer;

providing access to the player account responsive to a command initiated by a player at said one gaming device; and

determining whether the command is valid.

29. A method according to claim 27 or 28, wherein said method further comprises indicating to the player whether or not the gaming device is eligible to be paid a bonus.

5   30. A method according to claim 29, wherein indicating to the player whether or not the gaming device is eligible to be paid a bonus comprises actuating a light visible to the player.

31. A method according to any one of claims 27 to 30, wherein said method further comprises applying a first criterion for paying the bonus to a player providing a

10   valid command and a second criterion for paying the bonus to a player who does not provide a valid command.

32. A method according to any one of claims 27 to 30, wherein said method further comprises applying a first criterion for paying the bonus to a named player and a second criterion for paying the bonus to an anonymous player.

15   33. A method according to any one of claims 27 to 32, wherein initiating a bonus period comprises transmitting a command over the network to the gaming devices.

34. A method according to any one of claims 27 to 33, wherein said method further comprises:

20   using the network to track the amount of money played on the selected gaming devices; and

allocating a predetermined percentage played to a bonus pool.

35. A method according to claim 34, wherein the bonus period is initiated after the bonus pool exceeds a predetermined level.

36. A method according to any one of claims 27 to 35, wherein the predetermined event comprises a jackpot paid at one of the gaming devices.

37. A method according to any one of claims 27 to 35, wherein the predetermined event comprises random selection of one of the gaming devices.

5   38. A method according to any one of claims 27 to 37, wherein said method further comprises paying a bonus to a gaming device responsive to a pay command transmitted from the host computer over the network.

39. A method according to any one of claims 27 to 38, wherein said method further comprises:

10   storing data defining the minimum frequency of gaming device play in a memory at the gaming devices; and

comparing the frequency of gaming device play with the stored data.

40. A method for controlling a bonusing promotion system using a bonus server interconnected to a plurality of gaming devices substantially as hereinbefore
15   described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

41. A method of operating gaming devices interconnected by a computer network to a host computer substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.

42. A method of providing incentive to play gaming devices connected by a
20   network to a host computer substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.